

Amendments to the Claims: This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A support for apparatus in general and, in particular, for such as optical or photographic apparatus and the like including a tripod having a spider with a seat extending through the spider, the support comprising:

a pillar ~~(12)~~ having a stem and being arranged to receive the apparatus at a first end and to be housed with its stem ~~(11)~~ in the seat (4) extending through the spider (3) of the tripod (4), the support comprising, at the first end, the pillar being structurally independent of the spider and capable of being inserted removably in the seat and being slidable therein; and

an orientable platform ~~(14)~~ located at the first end of the pillar for the levelling of the apparatus independently of the positioning of the tripod ~~(1)~~, the pillar ~~(12)~~ being structurally independent of the spider ~~(3)~~, capable of being inserted removably in the seat ~~(4)~~ and being slidable therein, characterized in that the orientable platform ~~(14)~~ comprises having a first ball and socket joint including a ball ~~(16)~~ and a socket ~~(15)~~ fixed firmly to a fixing plate ~~(17)~~ of the platform and to the stem ~~(11)~~ of the pillar, respectively, or vice versa, and a tie rod ~~(23)~~ acting between the socket ~~(15)~~ and the ball ~~(16)~~ in order, when tensioned, to prevent relative rotation thereof, said ~~the~~ tie rod ~~(23)~~ extending through the stem ~~(11)~~ of the pillar and being operated by means of a knob ~~(29)~~ associated with a second end of the pillar ~~(12)~~, remote from the first end.

2. (Currently Amended) TheA support according to ~~Claim 1~~ in which spirit- further comprising a level mechanism (22) are associated with the plate (17).

3. (Currently Amended) TheA support according to ~~Claim 1 or Claim 2~~ in which further comprising a fixing mechanism (20) for a head (T) for the orientable support of the apparatus are is associated with the plate ~~(17)~~.

4. (Currently Amended) TheA support according to ~~one or more of the preceding claims 3~~ in which the fixing mechanism comprises at least one screw coupling which can clamp the head ~~(T)~~ or apparatus against the fixing plate ~~(17)~~ and at least one grub screw ~~(21)~~ which can preload the screw coupling fixing mechanism between the plate ~~(17)~~ and the

head ~~(T)~~ or apparatus.

5. (Currently Amended) TheA support according to ~~one or more of the preceding claims 1~~ in which ~~a~~the knob ~~(29)~~ is screwed onto the tie rod ~~(23)~~ by operative actuation of the knob ~~(29)~~.

6. (Currently Amended) TheA support according to claim 5 in which the knob ~~(29)~~ is associated removably with the tie rod ~~(23)~~ in order to be removed for the purpose of the removal of the pillar ~~(12)~~ from the seat in the spider ~~(3)~~ and its insertion therein.

7. (Currently Amended) TheA support according to ~~one or more of the preceding claims 1~~ in further comprising which a small plate ~~(34)~~, removable with the knob ~~(29)~~, is interposed between the knob ~~(29)~~ and the pillar ~~(12)~~ and ~~can projecting~~ radially from the pillar ~~(12)~~ in order to prevent the pillar from accidentally slipping out of the seat.

8. (Currently Amended) TheA support according to ~~E~~claim 7 in which the small plate ~~(34)~~ is fixed firmly to the female thread ~~(28)~~ of the knob.

9. (Currently Amended) TheA support according to ~~one or more of the preceding claims 1~~ in which further comprising preloading means are provided on the tie rod for ensuring a friction load in the first ball and socket joint when the tie rod is slackened.

10. (Currently Amended) A tripod including a support according to ~~one or more of the preceding claims 1~~ in which locking means ~~being~~ is provided between the spider ~~(3)~~ and the pillar ~~(12)~~ for locking the pillar ~~(12)~~ in the seat ~~(4)~~, in an adjustable position along the stem ~~(11)~~.

11. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to ~~E~~claim 10 in which the locking means comprises a brake ~~(35)~~ mounted in the spider ~~(3)~~.

12. (Currently Amended) TheA tripod according to ~~c~~Claim 10 ~~or Claim 11~~ in which the shape of the stem ~~(11)~~ of the pillar ~~(12)~~ and of the seat ~~(4)~~ in the spider ~~(3)~~ is such as to provide a non-rotatable guided coupling of the pillar in the spider.

13. (New) A support for apparatus such as optical or photographic apparatus, the support comprising:

a tripod having a spider with a seat extending through the spider;

a pillar having a stem and being arranged to receive the apparatus at a first end and to be housed with its stem in the seat extending through the spider of the tripod, the pillar being structurally independent of the spider and capable of being inserted removably in the seat and being slidable therein;

an orientable platform located at the first end of the pillar for the levelling of the apparatus independently of the positioning of the tripod, the orientable platform having a first ball and socket joint including a ball and a socket fixed firmly to a fixing plate of the platform and to the stem of the pillar, respectively, or vice versa, and a tie rod acting between the socket and the ball in order, when tensioned, to prevent relative rotation thereof, the tie rod extending through the stem of the pillar and being operated by a knob associated with a second end of the pillar remote from the first end;

a level mechanism associated with the plate;

a fixing mechanism for a head for the orientable support of the apparatus associated with the plate;

a small plate, removable with the knob, interposed between the knob and the pillar and projecting radially from the pillar in order to prevent the pillar from accidentally slipping out of the seat; and

preloading means provided on the tie rod for ensuring a friction load in the first ball and socket joint when the tie rod is slackened.

14. (New) The support according to claim 13 in which the fixing mechanism comprises at least one screw coupling which can clamp the head or apparatus against the fixing plate and at least one grub screw which can preload the fixing mechanism between the plate and the head or apparatus.

15. (New) The support according to claim 1 in which the knob is screwed onto the tie rod by operative actuation of the knob.

16. (New) The support according to claim 15 in which the knob is associated removably with the tie rod in order to be removed for the purpose of the removal of the pillar from the seat in the spider and its insertion therein.

17. (New) The support according to claim 16 in which the small plate is fixed firmly to the female thread of the knob.

18. (New) The support according to claim 13 further comprising locking means provided between the spider and the pillar for locking the pillar in the seat, in an adjustable position along the stem.

19. (New) The support according to claim 18 in which the locking means comprises a brake mounted in the spider.

20. (New) The support according to claim 18 in which the shape of the stem of the pillar and of the seat in the spider is such as to provide a non-rotatable guided coupling of the pillar in the spider.